

REMARKS

Claims 2, 4 and 7 have been amended. Claim 1, 8 and 9 have been canceled and claims 11-13 have been added.

The Examiner has rejected applicant's claims 1-3 and 5-9 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Fawcett, et al. (US 5,678,002) patent taken in view of the Phung, et al. reference (US Published Patent Application No. 2002/0007237). The Examiner has also rejected applicant's claim 4 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Fawcett, et al. patent in view of the Skaaning, et al. (US 6,535,865) patent. Applicant has canceled applicant's independent claims 1, 8 and 9, thereby rendering the Examiner's rejections directed thereto as moot. With respect to applicant's added independent claims 11-13, and their respective dependent claims, the Examiner's rejections are respectfully traversed.

Applicant's added independent claims 11-13 are believed to better define applicant's invention. More particularly, applicant's independent claim 11 recites a trouble management system capable of communicating, through a network, with a customer apparatus connected to a product, or a service person's apparatus, comprising: first receiving means for receiving trouble information of the product; determining means for determining whether or not a check item is necessary, on the basis of the trouble information received by said receiving means; transmitting means for transmitting the check item relating to the product to said customer apparatus, if said determining means determines that the check item is necessary; second receiving means for receiving, from said customer apparatus, a check result which is input to said customer apparatus on the basis of the check item transmitted by said transmitting means; diagnosing means for diagnosing whether or not there is a trouble with the product, in accordance with the check result

received by said second receiving means; and transmitting control means for effecting control to transmit, to said customer apparatus, a message indicating a plan of measures against the trouble information if said diagnosing means determined that there is no trouble with the product, and transmit, to said service person's apparatus, information indicating a service request if said diagnosing means determines that there is a trouble with the product. Applicant's independent claims 12 and 13 define a method and a storing medium for storing a program having similar features.

The features of applicant's amended independent claims 10-13 are supported by FIGS 2 and 3 and the description in applicant's specification as follows: first receiving means corresponds to steps S209 and S210 and the respective apparatus for carrying out these steps; discriminating means and transmitting means correspond respectively to steps S211 and S212 and the respective apparatus for carrying out these steps; second receiving means and diagnosing means correspond respectively to steps S213 and S218 and the respective apparatus for carrying out these steps; and transmission control means corresponds to the process executed dependently on a diagnosis result of the step S218 and the apparatus for carrying out that process.

Such constructions are not taught or suggested by the Fawcett, et al., Phung, et al. and Skaaning, et al references. More particularly, the Fawcett, et al. patent discloses a system in which a client is connected to a server via a communication line so that the server can diagnose trouble in the client computer via a telephone line. The Phung, et al. patent merely discloses a system in which a server communicates with a client to receive vehicle trouble information from the client and to provide vehicle diagnostic information to the client. The Phung, et al. patent also mentions the use of diagnostic trees in which if one diagnostic solution on a diagnostic tree fails

to correct a problem, another solution on the tree can be tried. Finally, the Phung, et al. patent also mentions that the system can provide recommended repair information and that the repair information is coupled with vendors and repair service centers whereby bids can be obtained for repair options. The Skaaning, et al. patent, on the other hand, discloses a system for providing estimate cost and time required for repairing.

However, none of these references teaches or suggests a system having a second receiving means which receives, from a customer apparatus, a check result which is input to the customer apparatus on the basis of the check item transmitted by a transmitting means, a diagnosing means which diagnoses whether or not there is a trouble with the product, in accordance with the check result received by the second receiving means, and a transmitting control means which effects control to transmit, to the customer apparatus, a message indicating a plan of measures against the trouble information if the diagnosing means determined that there is no trouble with the product, and transmit, to a service person's apparatus, information indicating a service request if the diagnosing means determines that there is a trouble with the product. Thus, applicant's independent claims 11-13, and their respective dependent claims, all of which recite such features, patentably distinguish over the Fawcett, et al., Phung, et al. and Skaaning, et al references.

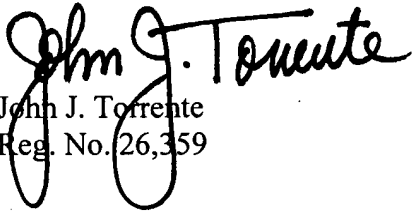
In view of the above, it is submitted that applicant's claims, as amended, patentably distinguish over the cited art of record. Accordingly, reconsideration of the claims is respectfully

requested.

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Respectfully submitted,


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